

BUILDING A NEW NORTHGATE BRANCH, COMMUNITY CENTER & PARK DESIGN UPDATE MEETING RECAP

6:30 p.m. to 9 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 5, 2003

Olympic View Elementary School, 504 N.E. 95th St.

Approximately 90 people from the community attended this meeting to discuss the current schematic design for the new Northgate library, community center and park, and preliminary designs for street improvements. Deborah L. Jacobs, city librarian of The Seattle Public Library, started the meeting with welcoming comments and introduced Ken Bounds, Seattle Parks and Recreation superintendent. Jacobs and Bounds introduced Greg Maffei, Library Board member and steward for the new Northgate Branch; Bruce Bentley, chairman of the Parks and Recreation Board of Park Commissioners; Erin Devoto, Parks planning and development director; David Kunselman, Library project manager for the Northgate project; Tim Motzer, Parks project manager for the Northgate project; Teresa Platt, Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) project manager; Claudia McCain, Library director of neighborhood libraries; Andy Bates, Neighborhood Library Services design team liaison for the new library; and Maureen A. O'Neill, Parks sector manager. Also attending were Alexandra Harris, Library capital program director, and Grace Crunican, SDOT director.

Jacobs and Bounds gave a quick recap of the project's history, including the site planning and design processes. They turned the meeting over to Teresa Platt from SDOT, who explained the street improvement project and showed renderings and schematic views of the site. Platt introduced Rob Spillar, director of traffic management for the city of Seattle, who described the Coordinated Transportation Investment Plan (CTIP) and SDOT's plans for traffic calming and cut-through traffic. Next, Kelly Davidson, Office of Arts & Cultural Affairs project manager, briefly discussed the art program for branch libraries and explained the artist roster and panel process used to choose an artist for the library project. The selected artist, Dana Lynn Louis, works primarily with metal and glass, and Davidson described her work as bold and colorful. Davidson introduced Marcia Iwasaki, Office of Arts & Cultural Affairs project manager, who discussed the art program for community centers and the selection process. She described the work of selected artist Nikki McClure, whose work uses paper cuts and includes sandblasting artwork onto metal and stone. Davidson turned the meeting over to Bob Hull, principal with The Miller/Hull Partnership, the architects for the project. Hull briefly spoke about the design process and schematic design stage, and described the design team objectives.

The members of the design team stood and introduced themselves: Kurt Stolle and Ruth Coates, The Miller/Hull Partnership; Bob Shrosbree and Mark Brands, Site Workshop, the landscape architects; and Doreen Gavin, AHBL, civil and structural engineers for the project. Hull showed images of the site, and reviewed the program elements, including the park as streetscape. Shrosbree discussed details of the park and site plan, water treatment/filtration systems and the change in the elevation of the site between the branch and community center. Hull outlined the architectural plan for the buildings, beginning with the branch, which will be located along Fifth Avenue Northeast for visibility and access. He showed the layout and elevations for the branch, and described the building as transparent, with a glass wall looking out over the park. He explained the design of the plaza area, and the decision to place it so it can be seen from Fifth Avenue Northeast. Hull then showed the layout and elevations for the community center,

outlining the various program elements, including the gym, multipurpose room, children's play area, large kitchen and activity rooms. Doreen Gavin then talked about Thornton Creek and stormwater management, outlining the proposed storm water systems and how they would act to reduce runoff.

Harris and Devoto facilitated questions from the community members:

Q. What is the width of the overhangs?

A. The overhang at the library, along Fifth Avenue Northeast, projects over the sidewalk a maximum of 6 feet to comply with code. Other building overhangs range from 6 to 12 feet, depending on sun exposure.

Q. The community center has a ramped corridor that leads to the gym and other rooms. How do you enter the rooms off the ramped corridor?

A. The ramp is a very gentle slope that goes down about 3 feet, at a rate of 1 and 20. The rooms off the ramp have flat landing-like areas at the entries. On the other side of the corridor, there will be a brick wall that we would like to hollow out into cubbies for seating areas. We are hoping to really activate the space.

Q. Could there be a way for people to enter the gym from the plaza?

A. We have not planned for an entrance to the gym from the plaza, in part because of the slope of the site. In order to keep the majority of the community center at the same level, we created one entry point at grade. This also allowed us to maintain security and monitor the entrance for control and access. There is a visual connection from the gymnasium to the plaza.

Q. Why are the children's daycare and outside play area not in the same place?

A. The design allows for easy drop-off and pick-up of children attending the daycare. The larger play area on the south side of the lot is not only for children who attend daycare, but also for neighborhood children. In addition, there's a play area outside the front door of the daycare, specifically for very young children. Children from the daycare would not go to the playground unattended. They would always have an adult with them.

Q. How friendly is the project for seniors, especially the community center ramp?

A. The community center ramp is a very gentle slope with a smooth transition, which is barely noticeable. The standard wheelchair ramp is 1 and 12, so this ramp, at 1 and 20, is much more gradual.

Q. It looks like there might be a choke point at the north end of the ramp in the community center. Is there any way to alleviate that?

A. The ramp is wider now than in earlier drawings. We believe this allows for easy passage through the building. Also, we feel that there are certain places that should be pedestrian gathering areas – and the north end of the ramp is one of those places. We will continue to review the width of the ramp as we move through the design process.

Q. Regarding the wall at the west edge of the park, will it be high enough to keep kids and balls out of the street?

- A. It's designed as a "seat wall," ranging in height from 16 to 24 inches as the ground slopes; it will keep kids from running directly out into the street.

Q. Can we get a bigger sidewalk? I also have concerns about where the playground is located; security could be an issue.

- A. The sidewalk is 12 feet wide; other sidewalks in the neighborhood are currently 5-6 feet wide. The size of the sidewalk has been set by the Fifth Avenue Northeast Streetscape Plans, and cannot be changed by the design team. Regarding the location of the playground, we have made every effort to create visibility to the playground from various points throughout the site.

Q. The design is beautiful, and it's nice to see the library and community center together. This plan gives a strong sense of community. What about parking for events? Please also look at lighting levels at crosswalks and entry points.

- A. We are looking closely at crosswalks, entry to the site, and tree planting. We will make sure the trees are trimmed, and are set far enough back not to block visibility at the crosswalks. There are currently 66 planned parking stalls; this may go down to 64, which is the minimum per the code that can be put on the site. The project had to be designed to accommodate not just vehicles, but pedestrians and mass transit as well. The main entrances to the library and community center, and the main entrance across the street to the Northgate Mall will be prominently marked so pedestrians don't forget they are entrances and exercise sufficient caution. SDOT will be looking at the street lighting to make sure it's adequate at night.

Q. What are SDOT's plans for 105th Street Northeast?

- A. The plan is to maintain it as it currently is, while creating pedestrian improvements. SDOT retains the right to improve it in the future.

Q. What is the material planned for the plaza?

- A. Probably concrete, some type of exposed aggregate, which will be striped or broken up in some interesting way.

Q. What about Library expansion?

- A. It is feasible the library could be expanded by up to 5,000 square feet on the south side, since the project is designed to allow for such a future possibility.

Q. I appreciate the attention stormwater has received. Have green roofs been considered? What about pervious surfaces for the plaza and parking area? Could landscaping in the parking area be used to relieve the stormwater runoff, perhaps with stormwater flowing into landscaped depressions or medians?

- A. Medians might be possible, but because of the elevation and cross slope at the upper part of the parking area, we would have a hard time getting a depression in there. These kinds of details are well worth exploring. We looked at green roofs, but they aren't in our budget. We are planning to allow for stormwater detention in other ways, with external gutters on all structures and a rain garden. We haven't fully decided yet on pervious pavement; Parks has tried pervious surfaces in Greenwood Park.

Q. Was underground parking considered?

- A.** Yes, we looked into the possibility of an underground parking structure, but it's not in our budget (the projected cost of underground parking was \$1.4 million to \$1.6 million). Major considerations were the cost, the need for shoring and concern for the adjacent steep slope, and access from the parking structure into the buildings to maintain security and monitoring of the parking area.

Q. I'm disappointed that the Library is right against a noisy street and isn't set back. The horizontal design looks very suburban, almost like a mall. The entrances are all off the parking lot and are not pedestrian-friendly. I suggest reversing the placement of the library and community center.

- A.** The placement of the library advertises its presence. We are confident that acoustic controls will be sufficient to control noise. The main reading space is focused toward the park and away from the street. We will install non-operable windows in the library to control noise and the indoor climate. We did look at various ways of laying out the site. We wanted to make sure that the park could be seen from the street, and the buildings had some separation. The height of the buildings approaches 22 feet, and the gym is 35 feet high, with ceiling heights of 15-16 feet to the bottom of the wood deck.

Q. The stairs around the plaza will be difficult to navigate for moms with strollers and older folks. What about on-street parking?

- A.** There are two small sets of stairs, which can be avoided, depending on your route. We feel this provides extremely effective access, given the topography of the site. Stairs are also places where people can sit. SDOT has committed to study and evaluate on-street parking as part of the CTIP. We have endeavored to provide ADA-accessible grades throughout the site, including the entry to the library (users have the option of taking either the stair or an accessible pathway).

Other comments included:

- ✱ A desire for a large patio that would serve the community center's multi-purpose room
- ✱ Concern that the football shape of the greenspace was too small and there would be too many paved surfaces
- ✱ Questioned the general location and visibility of the play area – want to ensure the wrong people don't loiter in that spot
- ✱ Questioned whether the library was tall enough
- ✱ Wanted more information about the new pedestrian crossing to the mall.

Greg Maffei discussed next steps, saying the design presentation of schematic work to the Seattle Design Commission would take place Nov. 6, and the Library would give another design update to the community in the spring toward the end of the design development phase. Plans will be available on the Library's Web site at www.spl.org and will also be available for viewing at the Temporary Northgate Service Site. He thanked everyone for coming and invited the attendees to pick up materials and fill out comment forms, to send comments to Library staff or e-mail the capital program office at capital.program@spl.org. People can also contact Library

project manager David Kunselman at 386-4096 or by e-mail at david.kunselman@spl.org, or Parks project manager Tim Motzer at 684-7060 or by e-mail at tim.motzer@seattle.gov. He invited the attendees to stop in the back of the room, at the six stations set up for the Library Design, Artwork, Site Work, Community Center Design, SDOT, and the Mayor's Initiatives, and ask further questions of staff at each station.

Bruce Bentley thanked everyone for coming and stressed the productive collaboration between Parks and the Library. He told the crowd that staff members were available to take their questions, and that their comments would be given careful consideration. The meeting ended at 9 p.m.